



A New Manuscript of Ali Riza Abbasi

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BRIEF NOTES

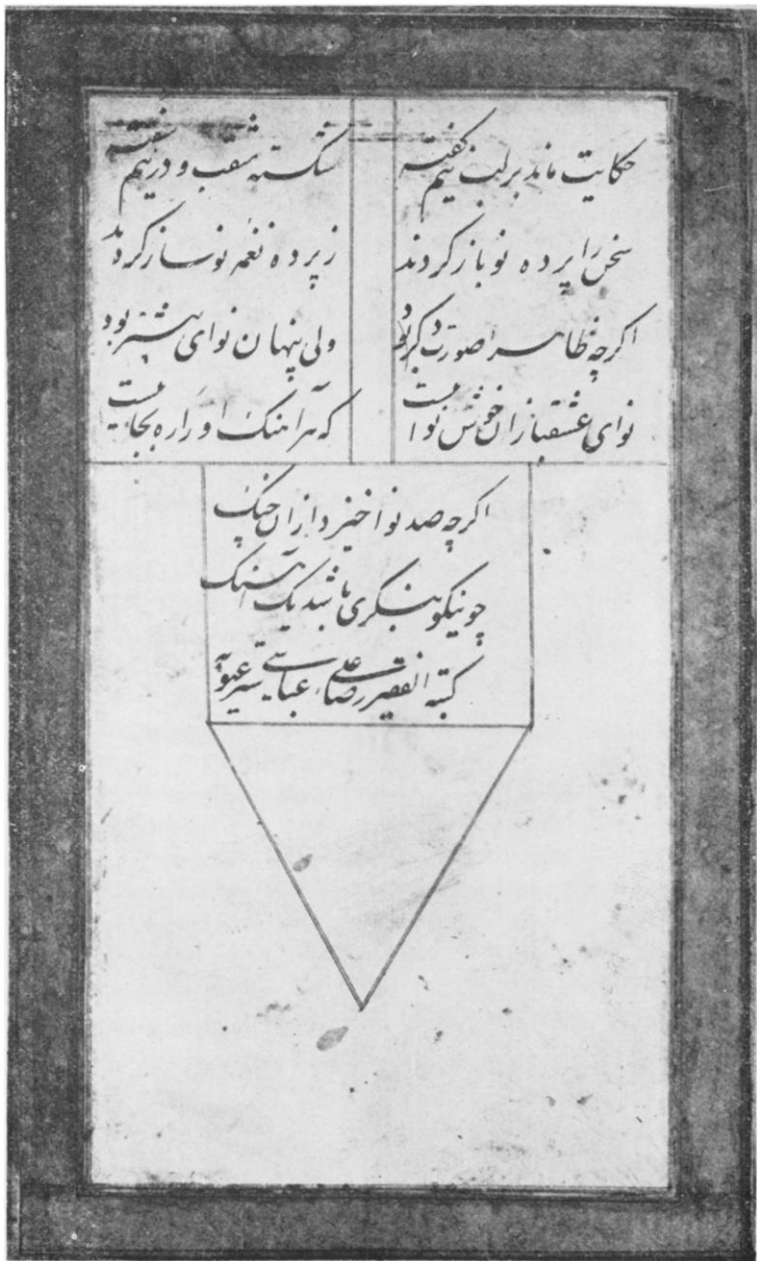
A New Manuscript of Ali Riza Abbasi

The famous Persian painter of the first half of the 17th century, Ali Riza Abbasi, is well known as a miniaturist in his native country and in Europe. That is very natural because a great quantity of his miniatures and drawings have been preserved until our time. For this reason, we have in European technical literature many works dealing with his painting.¹

But Ali Riza's ability as a calligrapher, celebrated in his time, is less known to us in consequence of the rarity of the manuscripts written by his hand. Of complete manuscripts we have only three, which are in the Russian Public Library at Petersburg (Dorn, Catalogue, p. 290, N 302; Dorn, *Mélanges Asiatiques*, VI, pp. 97 and 103, Nos. 3 and 18) and one separate sheet in the British Museum (Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, Vol. 2, p. 782, Add. 23609).

I am very happy to call attention to a fourth manuscript book by our calligrapher, which is in the possession of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. This manuscript contains the Mesnevi (poem) "Ferhad and Shirin" of Vahshi, a mediocre Persian poet of the 16th century. He was born in Bafik, Kirman, spent nearly the whole of his life in Yazd, and died there about 1583 A. D. His love-story of Ferhad and Shirin is an imitation of Nizami's poem "Khosraw and Shirin" and is written in the same metre, *hazaj*. "Ferhad and Shirin" was left unfinished by the author (Rieu, *op. cit.* Vol. 2, p. 663). Manuscript copies of this work are not uncommon; for instance, the British Museum possesses five (Or. 318, Or. 326, Add. 6634, Add. 7721, Suppl. 308; see Rieu, *Catalogue*), and in other European libraries there are many others. Moreover, this poem has been lithographed twice in Teheran (A. H. 1263 and 1275 = A. D. 1847 and 1858), once in Calcutta (A. H. 1249 = A. D. 1833) and twice in Bombay (A. H. 1274 and 1312 =

¹ For instance: F. Sarre, "Riza Abbasi, ein persischer Miniaturmaler," *Kunst und Künstler*, October 1910; J. von Karabacek, "Riza-i Abbasi, ein persischer Miniaturmaler," *Sitzungsber. d. K. Akademie d. Wiss. zu Wien, philos.-histor. Klasse*, B. 167, Abh. 1, 1911; F. Sarre-E. Mittwoch, "Zu Josef von Karabacek 'Riza-i Abbasi,'" *Der Islam*, 2. 196; F. R. Martin, *The Miniature Painting and Painters in Persia, India, and Turkey*, London 1912; F. Sarre-E. Mittwoch, *Zeichnungen von Riza Abbasi*, München 1914; and so on.



The last line contains the signature of Ali Riza Abbasi.

A. D. 1857 and 1894). The last edition we have in the New York Central Public Library (*OMO).

Our manuscript (Access. No. 23.28) is the gift of Dr. Vladimir G. Simkhovitch, who bought it in New York of Riza Khan Monif, whose father was once governor of one of the Persian provinces. The size of the manuscript in binding is $9\frac{7}{8} \times 6\frac{1}{8}$ in., without binding $9\frac{3}{8} \times 5\frac{7}{8}$ in.; written space $6\frac{3}{8} \times 3\frac{5}{8}$ in. The binding is of mediocre quality, tooled brown leather slightly embossed with gold and decorated with a design impressed upon the leather and gilded.

There are 44 folios. The writing is Nastaliq, 12 lines to a page in two columns with salmon outline and narrow bands of blue, gold, red and green colors. The outer border of the pages is light blue. The paper of the text, glued upon the blue space, is cream colored with gold specks. The writing, careless enough, very often without diacritical points, is in black ink, but the titles are in red. The title-page of the manuscript (fol. 1b) is decorated in the upper part with floral arabesques in blue, red, and yellow on gold and dark blue backgrounds. Fol. 2a is decorated with animal scenes in gold on a broad light-blue border.

On the last page, 44a, after the verses we find this line: "Ali Riza Abbasi, the poor, has written it." In this line lies the whole value of our manuscript, because, as I mentioned above, it is the fourth of the known works of Ali Riza, as calligrapher. The evidence of this sentence is confirmed by the signature, which may be seen in the accompanying photograph; it agrees in every respect with Ali's well-known signature.

I am much obliged to Mr. J. Breck, Curator of the Department of Decorative Arts of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, for his kind permission to publish this photograph.

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Lexicographical notes

The grammar and lexicography of the Assyrian code of laws deserves fuller study than it has yet received. The following suggestions are but a small contribution to the subject.

1. In Schroeder's *Keilschrifttexte aus Assur*, p. 3, kol. ii, l. 80